

**Virginia Board of Education**

**Student Advisory Committee**

**Minutes: April 19, 2005**

Students in Attendance:

Ashley Beaudin, James Wood High School; Patricia Castillo, Denbigh High School; Liz Chassey, Prince Edward Middle School; Jonte Craighead, The Gereau Center; Ginny Fuller, Monacan High School; Richard Ingebresten, Battlefield Middle School; Lori Lippman, Albert Hill Middle School; Katie Logan, Luray High School; Katelyn Mendoza, Monticello High School; Molly Rubin, Kempsville High School; Jessica Schatz, Courtland High School; Thomas Webb, Graham High School

Virginia Board of Education Members in Attendance:

Isis Castro and Eleanor Saslaw

Department of Education Staff in Attendance:

Anne Wescott, Michelle Vucci, Michelle Parker, Melissa Velazquez, Sandra Peterson

Mrs. Castro and Mrs. Saslaw welcomed the members of the Student Advisory Committee and reviewed the day's activities.

The Student Advisory Committee convened in their three work groups to discuss the research they had done since the last meeting and to develop their reports and recommendations for presentation to the Board of Education at its meeting on Wednesday, April 20, 2004.

The members of Work Group One developed their position and recommendations regarding Student Psychological Health/School Violence. The members of Work Group Two developed their position and recommendations regarding Testing and Creative Instruction. The members of Work Group Three developed their position and recommendations regarding Curriculum Diversity with a Focus in the Arts.

The entire Student Advisory Committee then convened to hear the presentations from the three work groups and to make any suggestions for changes to the final reports. The reports for presentation to the Board of Education at its April 20, 2005 meeting are attached. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**Statement from the 2004-2005 Student Advisory Committee  
of the  
Board of Education**

**Issue of Discussion:**

Raising Awareness of Psychological Health and Violence among Students in Virginia Schools

**Background:**

With exponentially increasing amounts of stress, depression, suicide, and violent behavior in Virginia's public school system, the issue has reached a point where it must be bluntly addressed. Stress, depression, and suicide have been a direct result of many large, often overlooked factors such as steadily increasing workloads and social demands. Violence in public schools often stems from social friction, a need for attention, pressures from workloads, and approval from peers and authorities. More than 344,000 cases of discipline, crime and violence occurred in Virginia schools during the 2002-2003 school year. Large-city schools are often the focal point for research and fact-finding to help determine the overall scope of depression and violence. However, appropriate attention has not been given to finding a realistic solution to the problem within Virginia's largest cities. Additionally, rural communities have recently been experiencing higher percentages of depression, suicide, and violence while research methods and realistic solutions have been overlooked in these areas as well.




**Position of the Student Advisory Committee:**

The Student Advisory Committee feels that serious steps must be taken in a prompt fashion to help combat the issue of failing psychological health and increased violence.

Accurate systems must be developed to create both immediate and long-term success in unraveling the problems students face. Another topic of concern is the lack of accurate methods of reporting that would be consistent throughout the entire state. If the state requires individual school districts to uniformly implement a more effective way of reporting incidents of violence, crime, and depression, then the state will be able to more accurately analyze the success of programs established by each district. The focus of these programs should include building: character, mental strength, work ethic, motivation, and determination.


**Recommendations:**

The Student Advisory Committee recommends that the Virginia Board of Education:

-  Implement a statewide reporting program, such as the PRIDE Survey.
-  Use the results of the reporting program to analyze the needs of each district.
-  Expand advertisements of available resources for individual districts from the state for character education programs that have been proven effective. For example:
  - The "Roanoke Coalition" – Community businesses and families in Roanoke, Virginia, that actively participate in local school functions by

providing money and services to help students expand their opportunities for education and advancement.

- The Resilient Child – Program that implements self-esteem, motivation, moral, and work-ethic habits into schooling at a young age to develop habits that allow students to be mentally healthy in higher levels of education and to further their ability to learn.
- Character Counts - Character education program emphasizing the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.
- Community of Caring – Grant program sponsored by Eunice Kennedy and Sargeant Shriver that helps students establish organizations within the school environment to raise the attitude of the community to care about each other and help maintain an atmosphere conducive to education and success.

 Seek more funds for school personnel (teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and administrators) for materials and the training of adults and students for the purpose of preventing and combating violence and psychological problems.

When the social and academic atmospheres are improved through these recommendations, the Commonwealth of Virginia will become fully prepared to treat this silent crisis.

Submitted by:

Ashley Beaudin

Patricia Castillo

Liz Chassey

JontJ Craighead

Virginia Fuller

Richard Ingebresten

Lori Lippman

Katie Logan

Katelyn Mendoza

Molly Rubin

Jessica Schatz

Thomas Webb

**Statement from the 2004-2005 Student Advisory Committee  
of the  
Board of Education**

**Issue of Discussion:**

Creating opportunities to renew and teach creatively towards testing.

**Background:**

The Standards of Quality passed by the General Assembly on teacher quality and educational leadership state that “teacher evaluations shall include regular observation and evidence that instruction is aligned with the school’s curriculum. Evaluations shall include identification of areas of individual strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for appropriate professional activities.” By following the standards the General Assembly has established, we are forced to evaluate the quality of our teachers in all aspects. It is often said that the embers of a successful student are kindled by the passion of a driven teacher. Thus, it is the integrity, compassion, and leadership of these teachers that will surely yield positive results in their pupils. The best way to examine teacher quality is through their in-class testing methods. Testing evaluates the ability of students to learn and grow. Thus, it is clear how vital it is to establish these skills thoroughly.

**Position of the Student Advisory Committee:**

Test preparation must be a year-long process, not based on seasonal periods. However, the key to such preparation is to prepare students in a way that they forget they are going through methods of test preparation, and instead focus on the interesting and even enjoyable manner in which they are being taught. As we all know, absorption of knowledge is more beneficial to a student than memorizing information verbatim.

**Formal Recommendation of the Student Advisory Committee:**

There are numerous approaches to this issue. Since every situation is different, one specific recommendation may not work for everyone. For this reason, we have the following recommendations:

- The integration of AP tests with normal class tests to teach students how to take the AP test, while also fulfilling the testing needs of the class itself.
- Better preparation for SATs and ACTs. We believe in starting this preparation in middle school and continue on through high school.
- Holding seminars for teachers so that they may learn new teaching strategies and renew their passion for teaching.
- An ongoing screening process that evaluates a teacher’s continuing qualifications as well as their ability to connect with students with qualities such as: integrity; compassion; respect; honesty; fairness; open-mindedness; subject matter expertise; communication; patience; imagination; leadership; and listening skills.
- Online resources for teachers that provide creative methods for teaching.

Submitted by:

Ashley Beaudin

Patricia Castillo

Liz Chassey

JontJ Craighead

Virginia Fuller

Richard Ingebresten

Lori Lippman

Katie Logan

Katelyn Mendoza

Molly Rubin

Jessica Schatz

Thomas Webb

**Statement from the 2004-2005 Student Advisory Committee  
of the  
Virginia Board of Education**

**Issue of Discussion:**

Promoting Curriculum Diversity through Education in the Fine Arts

**Background:**

It is widely acknowledged that the fine arts enhance students' abilities to improve skills in all areas of learning. According to the Fine Arts Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools, "knowledge and skills that students acquire through the fine arts instruction include the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, make informed judgments, work cooperatively with groups, appreciate different cultures, imagine, and create." While it is comforting to know that fine arts are important to the state, there are no specific requirements in middle or high school to ensure that students earn credit in the fine arts, which include visual art, music, dance, and theater. Currently, high school students need only take one credit of a fine or practical art to graduate. In middle school, fine arts can be completely avoided because these classes are simply offered, not required. However, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), fine arts are listed as core subjects. No distinction is made between math and theater. As the state works to implement the changes listed in the NCLB, the fine arts area is in need of special attention and modification.

**Position of the Student Advisory Committee:**

The positive effects of education in the fine arts are indisputable. The Student Advisory Committee wishes to ensure that these benefits are preserved and provided to all students across the state. Statistics show that students who have taken fine arts for more than five years on average score 100 points higher on the SAT. A direct correlation exists between arts-based learning and enhanced student achievement. In today's competitive society, colleges are looking for well-rounded students. Businesses are looking for innovative, free thinkers who are team players. Education in the fine arts creates individuals who possess many of these characteristics. The arts integrate basic neurological functions to maintain stable psychological health. A current focus of the Virginia Board of Education, as well as of the federal government, is increasing graduation rates among "at risk" students. Fine arts have proven to narrow the achievement gap among different socio-economic student groups. It is our hope that the following suggestions will contribute to the state's continued dedication to excellence in education.

**Recommendations:**

To put our position into action, we recommend that the State Board of Education:

- Require middle school students to pass one year or two semesters of fine arts in order to continue to high school.
- Require high school students to take one year of a fine art and one year of a practical art to graduate.
- Continue the standards currently in place in the elementary school level in the fine arts.

Our goal is to use these requirements to ultimately encourage re-evaluation of fine arts course offerings and funding. We intend for fine arts to one day be given equal attention as all other core subjects.

Submitted by:  
Ashley Beaudin  
Patricia Castillo  
Liz Chassey  
JontJ Craighead  
Virginia Fuller  
Richard Ingebresten  
Lori Lippman  
Katie Logan  
Katelyn Mendoza  
Molly Rubin  
Jessica Schatz  
Thomas Webb